

Interview with Brian.

**THE ZERO
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Brian Lewis is a professor at the open University in England. He was in India having been invited by the Indian government to offer suggestions as to how the Indian education system could be improved.

He agreed to assist with the proviso that his trip to India included a stopover at the ashram in Poona!

A cheerful middle aged man with an easy going and unpretentious air, Brian came forward to speak to Osho.

Osho: Mm! How are you?

Brian: I'm very well thank you Osho. I never thought I'd make it.

Osho: (with a chuckle) Yes, you made it! I was waiting

Brian: I'm glad to be here.

Osho: Something to say to me?

Brian: I did write to you.

Osho: Yes, I received your letter.

Brian wrote in early February saying he would like to visit the ashram, adding:

' I thought I would like to let you know that I am coming, and I hope you will not object to my visiting you. I do realise that seven days are a ridiculously short period of time but as professor in charge of a department of over 50 people, it simply is not possible for me to stay longer on this occasion.

As I travel around the world I usually write to people to ask if they have enough spare time to see me. I would very much like to make this request of Osho also, but I suspect that in His case (and in His case alone) He has more worthwhile ways of spending His time! To judge from the published discourses, I suffer from all the intellectual defects he associates, from time to time, with university professors. With luck I hope he will be tolerant enough to see me in the usual fashion-after Darshan with a group of other people.

There is much that I would like to ask Osho. For example successive discourses that I have read convince me that enlightened people can grow. And I would like to ask more about the intriguing relationship between harmony, unity and love ... Intriguing questions but all rather cerebral, I suppose. At a more practical level I would like to hear Osho's views about the possibility of improving the education system in India. If I am to be an adviser to the Indian government, I might as will pass on some enlightened knowledge, but only if Osho feels it is worth sparing the time

May I ask you then, to show this letter to Osho? If He thinks I might be of use to him in my dealings with official Indian educators, I should be happy to do whatsoever I can, but I am not asking for privileged treatment when I arrive at the ashram. And I would not wish to take up any of Osho's time at all, unless he feels it might be worthwhile. I am thrilled at the thought just being able to breathe the atmosphere for a days,

PEACE.

Brian: I really just came to see how I could help.

Osho: Mm. (a pause) You have talked to friends here?

Brian: Yes, I have. I spent two days talking to a lot of people here.

Osho: Mm. So find out some way.

Brian: Yes, I think I'll be able to.

Osho: (chuckling) Because I don't know much about how legal things go and how the academic minds work.

Brian: I think sometimes they don't work.

Osho: Yes, they don't work—That's what I mean! (Laughter)
They don't work. So you just manage.

Brian: I will do my best!

Osho: And you will be able to help because the Indian academic mind still functions exactly on the British lines.

Brian: (With a chuckle) I'm afraid we left you that!

Osho: They have not changed yet and they will never change it seems. They have got it very deep. So about that, do anything that you can do.

Brian: Well, that's really why I came—just to see what I might be able to do. And I'll be keeping in touch.

Osho: How long will you be staying?

Brian: Here, only a few more days. It was a five-week trip so this is the tail-end of it.

Osho: And then you go back directly?

Brian: Yes. I only came on the condition they would allow me to stay here.

Osho: Mm, I know—I read your letter! That is good. When will you be coming back? Next time, stay a little longer, mm?

Brian: I will certainly try. I hope to be back in about a year's time but I'll be in fairly constant touch.

Osho: (smiling, and leaning forward to touch Brian's head)
Come back!

In an interview three days later, Brian described how he first came across Osho's shows words

Brian: Well, of all things, I came across a book, 'Dynamics of meditation' which was in Foyle's. I think you know Foyle's in London; It's the last place you ever expect to see any good books. I was just cruising through the book and it seemed to me to have a different quality about it, so I checked it out and got one or two other earlier books, 'The Inward Revolution' and 'I am the Gate', and then started looking for more.

I discovered actually that about 90% of the people I meet have done all the meditations, or a large number of meditations and have hardly read a word that's been written. I think I'm the reverse: I think I've read virtually everything!

Maneeshha: Did the interest start as a personal searching or because you felt that Osho's ideas could be used for education

Brian: In fact I'm a psychologist by training and for some years now I've been developing what I call 'the theory of human mess'. I'm interested in the sort of traps that people set themselves again and again and the sort of knots they screw themselves into, the sort of difficulties they get into in their personal relationships, and the way they flagellate themselves to try to solve problems that they don't have the ability or the resources to solve. So I've been working in that general area intermittently for about 10 years.

One of the things I liked about Osho's books or discourses, is that they seem to offer a philosophy of life which I hadn't actually seen anywhere else, and so much of it rang true, and that's why I've been pursuing it.

I think I was probably a cannibal in a previous incarnation, because I now tend to gobble up ideas that other people are producing. And I'm really gobbling these ideas up with a view to trying to elaborate a view about human nature and life-styles which I think will turn out looking very much like the one Osho offers, but possibly addressed, possibly written in a way which will have greater appeal to academic audiences and educators.

Maneesh: Do you see what Osho says in terms of a psychological model, or was it that spirituality, religion or whatever, became a natural outcome of your own work?

Brian: I see it as a mixture of psychology and philosophy. It is really very much concerned with how to live and how to get the most out of life, and that's really what I mean by psychology and philosophy. You can call it religion if you like, but it wouldn't have been my description. I don't think Though I understand what Osho says when he says that.

But one of my interests is actually trying to communicate to educators and get the educational system changed some way, because I think that at the moment the educational system is a sort of power structure that is destroying about two-thirds of the population. It just amazes me that anybody survives it.

But the other thing I'm interested in is trying to get a number of practices going at an early age so that people actually don't get screwed up. A lot of people that come here are in all sorts of personal difficulties and in a way the group activities are mostly oriented towards helping them to gain some insight into their own condition and the condition of other people. But it would be nice to have an educational system which actually prevented that happening, and so there were fewer people that had to come. It's a sort of remedial exercise to a large extent now, and it would be very nice if it were possible to reduce the damage that gets done in early childhood. And that calls I think for a rather elaborate diagnosis.

For example, there are just three primitive societies that have been discovered where there's no concept of punishment, and animals don't have a concept of punishment. They get angry, they cuff their young and so on, but there is no concept of punishment as such. And there are just two or three societies that anthropologists have discovered where the same things happen, and it seems a very relaxed, peaceful society. In every case they're sympathetic. If anyone looks worried they may try to find out what is worrying the person. And it's a totally different feel about those societies.

It may be that when you get modern technological societies there's no way you can do without punishment, and that poses a real challenge.

And for example, in these primitive societies the kids handle sharp knives and they play around the fire and they run away, but they never seem to cut themselves and do any serious damage. They never get really burned and they never get lost!

But if you've got a modern technological society in which your a mother and you see your child rushing across a busy road, it's only natural that you're going to start scolding the child; it's just a sort of natural, protective instinct. And so the whole notion of punishment comes in virtually automatically as a consequence of having that kind of technology around.

I think that we're paying a much heavier price in the West for all the material goods we get and a much heavier price for technological society than people realise. So what can be done about this, I'm not sure, but

Maneesha: Well, what did you see in essence that Osho was saying that you thought could be a help.

Brian: I think he would like to see people who are authentic and responsible, authentic and sympathetic, if you like. Probably to be authentic is enough, because if you're authentic the rest tends to follow, but as it doesn't follow in the minds of a lot of people.. ..I mean if you say to some people, 'Be authentic-if you want to go and hit somebody, hit somebody,' they'll just go and hit somebody! (Laughter)

And really that's either not the whole message or only part of the message, and that is I suppose, one of the problems about answering questions-but if you have a question and answer session, and you answer a question in twenty minutes, then there's a very limited amount that you can say. And it's inevitable that people misunderstand.

That's another thing I'm interested in: I'm really interested in trying to do more to help people to cultivate listening skills. On the whole I think people don't listen. I mean, they think they're

listening, but they believe that their fantasy of what the other person is actually saying is exactly what the other person is saying.

So I think that there are things that can be done about that as well, but how much you can do ultimately, I'm not sure. That remains an open question.

Maneesha: Do you feel that you can do something practical with what you've got from being in the ashram with Osho, from what you know of Osho?

Brian: Yes, I was very glad I came and I'd like to come again for a longer period. It's actually not too easy to get away. You probably know what it's like if you have some kind of responsible job in England. Nobody does your work while you are away and people get up-tight about leaving the department you're running because there are all sorts of politics going on. If you're not there to protect their interests, they feel vulnerable. And of course you have to square it with your wife and family and other people, and so on so it isn't at all easy. But it's probably easiest if you drop out altogether—which I have actually done at one time in my life.

But I'm now very much immersed in the education system, and as I happened to be in a position where I think I can influence things a bit, people do pay some attention to me, it's probably worth hanging on to that to see whether I can get anything done. But the price one pays is that it's very difficult to get away and particularly difficult to get away for long periods.

But I was very glad to come and I think Osho must have been a sort of Leonardo perhaps he was Leonardo at one time. (Laughter) He has the sort of Leonardo quality about him.

Maneesha: You mean his being so eclectic?

Brian: Yes, that's right. And I think that what's happening here is pretty good.

One of the things I got involved in while I was over here as well is this business of trying to get the foundation recognized

academically.

I don't have much personal pull at the moment with Indian officials, but I think I might be of some use eventually.

Maneesha: Do you see personally that it's important that we do become recognized so we can continue in growth?

Brian: I've got mixed feelings about it actually. I don't think too much of this educational system as its set up at the moment. And one of the problems is that there is always this narrow dividing line between being a rejecter and being rejected. So if you show through your actions that you reject the academic world, then the academic world tends to reject you.

In fact if you want to be accepted by the academia that may be a rather heavy price to pay. It might be that there won't be the visa restrictions, and various ridiculous constraints on building new houses and more new auditoriums. If there won't be these restrictions, I think it will be better just to sort of exist in a sort of slight co-existence with the academic world without actually trying to get accepted by it.

But it's really almost an ends and means thing. You know, if it really is important to make sure so that Westerners can come, and on student visas and so on in years to come, I think you may have to make some friendly noises towards the academic world, whether you feel that's the right thing to do or not.

Maneesha: Do you personally feel what is going on here needs to be perpetuated and helped to grow, and that it can really have world-wide repercussions?

Brian: Yes, I do. I think it's really a pity that one of the things that happens when you get involved in all these groups is that you no longer feel like sitting down and writing. You have quite a number of people here who have got quite respectable academic backgrounds and are well able to write if they want to. They could in fact write about encounter groups and all these other sort of meditational systems and there would be a tremendous audience for this kind of material if it were produced.

But it looks as if one of the consequences of engaging in this kind of activity is that people no longer feel inclined to spend their time doing that. And I think that's a pity in a way because I do believe that if anyone has got anything worth saying, they jolly well ought to say it. And I think there are a lot of people here who have got things worth saying, and if they don't say it then the world loses.

In fact one of the things I suggested is that if an institute or Academy of some kind was set up, then you ought to start a professional journal-' The Journal of human growth' or whatever-and just persuade people to spend some time telling the world what it is they're doing, and what the consequences are and so on, because I think people ought to know about it.

I don't think the discourses being printed by themselves are sufficient. I think it's true as the discourses mount upI think Osho must have at least overtaken Agatha Christie! (Laughter) She produced about 80 books before she died, and he's obviously going to be the most published wise man in the world about, and so what he has to say is becoming less and less ignorable. But it doesn't follow that anyone would do anything about it or do anything about it quickly.

I mean, there's dear old Krishnamurti who has released about thirty or forty books and everyone says this is great, he's a wonderful man, etc, etc, but nobody takes any notice of him in the educational world.

I think there's one Krishnamurti School in England and one or two in the States, but even fewer than the Steiner schools, and Steiner you know, was he was pretty prolific; he produced about thirty or forty books. Have you seen any?

Rudolf Steiner is another example of someone who produced a whole lot of interesting views about the educational system and how it might be changed, but it really has no effect. And so it wouldn't follow that as these publications pile up people are going to take some notice.

I think you really have to communicate to educators and

politicians in a way that they understand, in a way that doesn't make them feel nervous.

Maneesha: Can you talk a little about your impressions of the ashram since you've been here? What were your first feelings when you came to the ashram?

Brian: I thought it very nice I thought it was a beautiful place, in fact. I was taken very much by the auditorium and the trees and birds and so on; it's a beautiful setting and I like the people here. I know they make a lot of people in town nervous, but (laughter).. .. in fact, I think it's a very good atmosphere on the whole. I think that there are some people who will never benefit from anything because they're sort of too screwed up; you actually can't solve everybody's problems who come here, but I'm quite sympathetic towards these kinds of group activities because I've seen them in an operation and I know they can be quite effective if they're done sensitively.

And by the time people reach adulthood with the semi-fictions they have about themselves, it probably takes a group that is pretty ruthless to point out that you're not really like that-but maybe there's some of the good points you think you have you haven't got and some of the bad points you think you had, you haven't got. It's a positive and a negative message that comes across in these groups-that people find they've got hidden strengths and they also find that they've got hidden weaknesses, all hidden to them that is.

And you know a lot depends on how well the whole operation is run. I haven't actually observed any groups in action but all the evidence suggests that on the whole they are pretty good and pretty effective-maybe a few failures, but there's obviously some successes as well.

And the overall atmosphere strikes me as being very pleasant, very relaxed.

Maneesha: Well, do you see in essence that that's what's happening here or that what Osho is doing is that plus something else? You said that what appealed to you was his message of being authentic and this is what the groups are

based on. .. but do you see that he is doing something else?

Brian: I think that he's trying to do much more than that. One of the reasons that I asked the question (In the morning discourse) about the third psychology is because I see the whole purpose of his work is in moving beyond the healthy mind to the awakened mind.

It's very difficult to put this in words but roughly speaking, as I move around in life I occasionally come across people who I think see more truly than others. They seem to understand the human situation and they come out with things which may go against the existing conventional wisdom, but they ring true and you feel they're right. You recognize that conventional wisdom isn't actually so wise as people think it is.

So occasionally you come across people who appear to be able to see more truly than others and I'll certainly put Osho right at the top of that particular list. I think he's definitely trying to move beyond the early two psychologies, as he puts it—the psychology of the abnormal personality and the psychology of the healthy personality, to the psychology of the enlightened or awakened personality.

And that's certainly a big improvement, but I think you actually have to go through the first two stages first; you know, the way out of the woods is through the wood. So really you have to gain some insight into abnormality and normality to move beyond that.

I don't really think that these groups do all that much to move people beyond healthy stage. I think they're tending to shift people from somewhat neurotic conditions to fairly healthy conditions but more is required and I've no doubt that Osho will suggest more procedures and so on—or more devices as he prefers to call them—as time goes by.

Maneesha: Just having him here, just his presence, as an example of a really, really healthy person is, in itself, fantastic. Because before, in the west, anybody you emulated was only a bit higher than you, a bit clearer than you, may be, in certain directions, but no one was there. For me just having him here

and feeling that he is my potentiality realised

Brian: I think that's right, actually. I think that the dose you get every morning (laughter) is really pretty good nourishment.

I've been visiting Poona University and the Tata Institute of Training and Management and so on because they descended on me when they heard I was here. I did one or two seminars, and there is quite a lot of interest there in the ashram.

The sort of comment that gets made is 'Well, if he's saying the same things over and over again' I don't actually believe that's true; it's a much more sophisticated message in some ways. It's a whole lot of this, and an almost indefinitely large number of related things that he's saying; he's not actually saying the same thing over and over again.

And you know, I think that actually living a healthy life or an enlightened life is in some ways a lot easier and in some ways a lot more difficult than most people realise. It's not a question of having half a dozen guidelines up your sleeve and living, you knowLife isn't as easy as that.

Maneesha: Can you talk of your feelings about Osho for the first lecture that you came to?

Brian: I've only managed to attend four discourses actually, and the first was a question and answer session, which I thought was a pretty remarkable performance. I mean, overall I'm just amazed at the way in which he is able to keep it up day after day, week after week, month after month.

There must be a tremendous, unlimited capacity almost, and I don't find it repetitive, so I just assume that people who think it is repetitive haven't understood what he's been saying. I think it's all concerned with matters of being authentic, being sympathetic as opposed to instrumental.

I obviously have different ways of describing it, but I've worked out my own position on a lot of these things. My basic distinctions are between people who are instrumental and people who are sympathetic—an instrumental person being

someone who sees other people as pawns that need to be manipulated and the sympathetic person doing the exact opposite: trying to project himself into the other person's point of view being aware of how the other person is feeling and thinking, at the same time being aware of how he himself was thinking and feeling. As I said earlier, the educational system doesn't equip people to have those skills, it doesn't equip people to develop skills of that kind.

He was very much as I expected him to be, and that's because I have seen so many photographs and I've heard the tapes, so I felt I knew what the place was like before I got it. I expected to see a gentle personality and the loving personality, and the personality in complete control of almost any question, stupid or otherwise, thrown at him, and that's what I found.

I think he's a beautiful person, and I'm very pleased I was able to come, even though it was a short period.

Maneesha: Can you talk about your experience at Darshan—when you came to Darshan the other night?

Brian: Yes. That again just reconfirmed the impression that I got previously and from discourses. It seemed to me to have essentially the same flavour as a question and answer session on a slightly more intimate, more personal scale. And I suppose one of the things that did impress me a little is that he does appear to take a much more personal interest. It's been said that he is harder to see than the Pope these days (laughter) and that nobody ever gets individual audiences any more.

He does actually appear to know everyone in the ashram as individuals, and that again is a pretty remarkable achievement when I must say that people with beards all look the same to me! (laughter)

I just can't distinguish them. I don't know whether you got that experience when you first came here; I don't know whether you thought lots of people looked alike and you couldn't tell one from the other?

Maneesha: Right! Especially as were all wearing long robes too—

men and women.

Brian: Yes, that's right, that's exactly right. He does actually appear to still have a personal relationship of some kind, of a significant kind, with everyone here, and considering he doesn't give private audiences that's pretty good going.

It struck me as being adequate-though we didn't have much to say to each other because there wasn't really anything that needed to be said. I'd just explained already that I'd come over just to enquire how I could help and he said he hoped I'd find some ways, and that was really enough; there wasn't really any need to say any more. I don't regard silence as something that has to be filled, so I didn't intend it to be a chattering session, and it wasn't.

It's a good experience; this whole Ashram has been a good experience, actually.

Maneesha: Do you feel you as a person-rather than just an educator-have gained something from being here?

Brian: Well, it's really been more of a confirmation than a gaining, because I've already gained an enormous amount. I'm really addicted to these books (laughter) which I find so full of insights, but in fact as an educator, I've already sort of rethought my own position on what the educational system might do in the future, and that's me doing my thing essentially.

I do have some quite strong views how the whole educational system might be reconstituted from the grassroots up, as it were. I actually have almost a complete collection of everything that's been produced-I've got all the books and magazines and a lot of tapes and newsletters and so on. I found it immensely stimulating, immensely valuable, so I think by far the greatest gain had already occurred before I arrived here.

And this is always true of course-but if someone is writing or speaking along the lines which you've been over yourself then it all becomes much more meaningful. So you know, coming here was really more or less to see what it was like in reality, and it turned out to be very much as I expected, and you know, just

a good experience.

